MIAMI

By Aristides J. Millas

In 1870, William Brickell and his family arrived at Fort Dallas. He had decided to settle in this new country and bought two tracts of land south of the Miami River, of 640 acres each. The land was originally acquired under the Settlement Act of Congress. Mr. Brickell, a former resident of Cleveland, Ohio, built and operated on the south side of the river Miami's first store, the only one in this vicinity until after the city was incorporated. He also built his home on what is now known as Brickell Point.

In 1880, Mrs. Julia Tuttle and her ailing husband paid a visit to her father, Ephriam T. Sturtevant, who was then living near what is now Little River. Shortly afterwards Mrs. Tuttle returned to her home in Cleveland. After the death of her husband, she returned to Fort Dallas. She decided that this was the ideal place in which to live. She purchased 644 acres on the north side of the river at a cost of $12.40 per acre.

By 1890, a small settlement had mushroomed around Fort Dallas near the mouth of the Miami River. Mrs. Tuttle, hearing of the railroad Flagler was building as far south as West Palm Beach, made a trip up to see him and promised to hand over half of her extensive acreage if he would extend his railroad this far. His first answer was a refusal. Then came the "Big Freeze" of 1894-1895 when the ice was reported to be an inch thick in some parts of northern Florida. She again contacted Flagler, sending him flowers to prove that Miami was below the Freeze Line. This time, Flagler agreed to bring his railroad to Miami. Mr. Brickell also donated his share of the property; thus Flager's property included half of the original townsite, 640 acres of the best

land from what is now Flagler Street to the river, except the Dallas Park site. Work was immediately launched on extending the railroad, which arrived on April 15, 1896.

A small town sprang up like a mushroom almost overnight. On July 28, 1896, Miami was incorporated as a city. Up until this time it had been named Fort Dallas.

Naming the city created quite a discussion among the 480 inhabitants. Flagler and the railroad group wanted to call the city "Flagler." Mrs. Tuttle and Mr. Brickell wanted it named "Miami," an Indian word meaning "sweet water" after the Miami River. The name Miami was chosen.

The "Magic City" was a phrase coined by pioneer journalist E. V. Blackman as he wrote for, and later edited, *The Home Seeker,* a magazine that Mr. Flagler was beginning to publish for the purpose of attracting people to the city his railway had placed on the map.

Early Miami was an innocent city of houses and luxurious foliage amidst the church spires from six Christian denominations on lands donated by Mr. Flagler (with the exception of the Episcopal Church). The following was written by Mrs. J. N. Lummus in 1903: "I have been all over Florida and in no other town are the streets as clean and attractive as are found here. The sidewalks are made of the soft, white rock and are considered more enduring than asphalt. There are two newspapers published here, several large hotels besides Mr. Flagler's palace hotel, the Royal Palm, built amid rich tropical flowers, beautiful palms and graceful coconut trees."

Dr. William Davenport, a dentist, would write in his recollections from 1909, "In spite of its cozy small-town appearance with 'everyone knows everybody else' connotations, Miami in its adolescent days under the coconut trees was largely a collection of strangers, strangers to the town and to each other. We had all come from someplace else...."

A map of Miami in 1899 (three years after incorporation) which was compiled by the author from the fire insurance maps produced by the Sanborn Map Company shows the first buildings erected in early Miami. One hundred and ninety four structures can be counted. This included the Miami Hotel, which housed the workers for Flagler's railroad, and the grand Hotel Royal Palm.

The Royal Palm officially opened on January 16, 1897 with much fanfare. It was sited at the confluence of the Miami River and Biscayne Bay to provide good air circulation for the nearly 600 guests sitting there in their rocking chairs (hence the term "Rocking Chair Tourism"). This was a unique feature for the seventh hotel of the Flagler East Coast system, which many pronounced as the most beautiful hotel of all because of its splendid setting. It was painted in a bright 'Flagler' yellow with white trim, as were the Palm Beach hotels. The typical day for the guests at the Royal Palm would be one of continuous, almost exhausting, activity with a great deal of clothes changing.

Clearly noted on the map are the rows of cottages Flagler constructed for his employees on present-day SE 1st and SE 2nd Streets, a swimming pool constructed in 1889, and the First Presbyterian Church and manse constructed on the original hotel grounds north of the hotel. The 200-room Miami Hotel and adjacent buildings shown on the map, including the *Miami Metropolis' News,* did not last long. They were burned in the second major fire of early Miami in November 1899 (the first was in December of 1896). The Royal Palm, which was the cornerstone for Miami's growth, also had a short life. It was demolished in 1930 and is still a parking lot today, 70 years later.

In late 1899 Dr. James M. Jackson, Jr., Miami's pioneer physician who came with Henry Flagler, would build a house on the northeast corner of 2nd Avenue (then called Avenue B). He

lived there until 1916 when the house was moved by barge to its present location at 186 SE 12th Terrace along with his old office, built in 1905. The office now serves as the headquarters for Dade Heritage Trust and is a National Register site.

Also in 1899, the Dade County seat of government was moved from Juno, Florida to Miami.

The growth of the City of Miami can essentially be described as occurring in three stages. The first stage would be the original platting of streets (the "Miami" subdivision) on the north side of the river on Julia Tuttle's lands, and on the south side on William Brickell's lands, covering approximately a two-square-mile area. This was the extent of the village at the time of incorporation on July 28, 1896.

The second stage of growth occurred in 1913 when the city expanded northwest and southward to cover an area of sixteen square miles. The southward expansion would include the James Deering estate, which would soon be constructed, eventually employing one thousand persons including many imported craftsmen. In the 1915 promotional booklet "Lure of the Southland, Miami and Miami Beach Florida" all the virtues and accomplishments of the "Magic City," now at 20,000 population and growing faster than any city in the South, would be stated.

Especially noteworthy are photos of the early homes in the new residential sections of "Miramar" in the north, developed by Frederick H. Rand Jr., and "Pointview" in the south, developed by L. T. Highleyman. Both sections featured bulkheaded shorelines with a curving drive and walkway at the water's edge. In Miramar, a concrete dock was constructed for use by all the residents. In 1912 the area on the+ bay north to 36th Street (the new city limits) would be platted and known as Edgewater, with some early structures still standing today.

Beyond the new city limits would be the large Charles Deering estate, known as Bay Point today, and the "Buena Vista" neighborhood immediately to the west. In 1915 this was the terminus for the Dixie Highway with a large archway welcoming visitors to Miami.

The final stage of growth for Miami would naturally occur in 1925 at the height of the "Boom." Wrote Frederick Lewis Allen in ***Only Yesterday*** as he described the 1920s preceding the crash of 1929, "The whole city had become one frenzied real estate exchange. There were said to be 2000 real estate offices and 25,000 agents marketing house lots or acreage."

In this stage of growth the city limits would expand to 43 squares and would include Miami Shores, Biscayne Park, El Portal, and North Bay Village. All of these later dis-annexed and became independent municipalities, giving Miami its present boundaries.

In his ***Memories of Old Miami,*** Hoyt Frasure wrote of the Florida Boom at its height in 1925, saying "packed trains brought hundreds of new people to Miami daily. The Florida East Coast unloaded up to 75 Pullmans a day at its depot near where a new skyscraper courthouse was being erected (over the existing 1904 courthouse). People were pouring in at the rate of 2000 a day." He continued, "Miami's skyline looked like a whole city under construction – and it was. The first skyscraper, the 10-story McAllister Hotel, had just been completed in 1919. Now the steel frameworks of new skyscrapers were rising all over the downtown section."

The 28-story Dade County Courthouse was advertised in *Atlantic Terra Cotta* brochures as the tallest building south of Baltimore, Maryland. Its height would eclipse that of Miami's architectural landmark, the 15-story Miami News building, patterned after the Giralda tower in Seville, Spain and completed in 1925. However, all of this high-rise downtown activity was occurring north of the Miami River.

To the south, the Brickell additions were receiving luxurious estate homes as "Millionaires' Row" was being created in the vicinity of James Deering's Villa Vizcaya. In 1924, in the midst of the boom, the J. B. Forbes Plumbing and Heating company was established, having arrived from Columbus, Georgia , where it is still in business. James Forbes Jr. recalls vividly how he and other young boys would go quail and dove hunting, fishing and swimming in the canals in those Deering and Brickell area estates.

To the north of the Miami River, in the bustling city center, the Wolpert Realty and Improvement Company was established in 1923. Recalls young George Wolpert, whose family relocated here from Brooklyn, "The real estate boom was already in full swing and almost everyone in town was either buying, selling, or acting as a broker on lots, acreage or buildings...that walk down Flagler Street became one of the most memorable days of my life. Walking east I passed the Hippodrome Theater and the Halcyon Hotel until I reached the end of Flagler Street. Built out over Biscayne Bay stood Elser Pier where they had a huge room for dancing and special events, souvenir shops, food stands, tourist information booth and stores."

The colorful tourist brochures of those boom days advertised, "Miami in a Coconut, the Land of Palms and Sunshine" and offered a "Seven Days in Miami" program. The first day would be getting acquainted with Miami, the "wonder city of America" or "America's fastest growing city." Offered would be three enchanting vistas in every direction. Northward on Bay Shore Drive (as it was called before Biscayne Boulevard was created), tourists would pass the panorama of yachts anchored in the bay and the municipal docks with the great steamships, going north to the exclusive "Miramar" subdivision or crossing over the county "cruiseway" to see luxurious homes on Miami Beach. Or tourists would be taken across the Miami River to

stately Brickell Avenue, seeing the lovely homes of "Pointview" and "Millionaires' Row" and visiting shady Coconut Grove, the home of celebrities. The second day would offer excursions on the water, ocean, and bay or up the Miami River to the Tropical Garden and Indian villages. The third day was devoted to the great outdoors, with every variety of sport, including golf, tennis, polo, bowling on the green, bridle paths for horse lovers, horseback and greyhound racing and the Basque game of Jai alai. The fourth day would be bathing under tropical skies at the many casinos and beaches. The fifth day would be deep-sea fishing. The sixth day featured a trip to the mysterious Everglades, and the seventh day – the "Aesthetic side of Miami." This included religious services in the many churches, a visit to the estate of the late James Deering (deceased in 1925) which was open to the public on Sunday afternoons, or listening to music played by Arthur Pryor's band under the palms in Royal Palm Park downtown.

Of course the "Boom" ended, followed by the devastating Hurricane of 1926 (they did not name storms in those days) and the stock market crash of 1929.

But as the rest of the country was sinking deeper into the Great Depression of the 1930s, Miami began to make a comeback. Tourists continued coming, and some new building was occurring. In 1931, the second U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was constructed, as well as the outstanding Alfred I. DuPont Building (1938) where the Halcyon Hotel had stood on Flagler Street. The 1939 WPA guide to Florida described Miami as having a "Manhattanish touch to the gleaming white and buff skyscrapers...and the effect of the skyline rising abruptly from the waterfront and flood lighted at night, is heightened by the flatness of the terrain." It also describes Miami's showcase street Biscayne Boulevard adorned with royal palms and fronting the beautifully landscaped Bayfront Park overlooking the Bay. These were the most significant civic improvements created during the peak of the Boom years.

The 1957, 14th Edition of "Highlights of Greater Miami" devoted its 94 pages to all of Miami's features and their history over the more than half century of the city's existence. The creation of Bayfront Park is told in great detail. "Thirty-nine acres studded with trees, flowers and shrubs from tropical countries around the globe; 10,000 individual plants and trees...designed by Warren Henry Manning (world famous landscape artist) of Cambridge, Massachusetts."

World famous Biscayne Boulevard and the modernistic hotel row fronting it are carefully described. These hotels housed U.S. Naval personnel during the war. The 1957 guide continues, "On all sides building is soaring...new hotels, apartments, homes and commercial structures greet the eye in all sections of the city. Thousands of Latin Americans, finding Miami their most convenient shopping and play center, have joined the city's annual pilgrimage of millions, thus giving a distinctive Latin note to its colorful cosmopolitan life."

In January 1957 Dade County metropolitan government established a home rule charter for the 20 existing municipalities. In 1943 during World War II, Miami, the central city, had 63 percent of the county population. By 1960 the city would have only 31 percent of the metropolitan population of 935,000, then one of the fastest growing regions in the nation.

Today, the picture is problematical. Metropolitan government is struggling, and its accomplishments are marred by corruption and inefficiency. New breakaway communities have incorporated, with others waiting to do so. The traditional central city of Miami has recently tottered near bankruptcy, containing approximately 14 percent of the regional population. Still there is a great deal of activity in the downtown area.

"Downtown Miami" today is defined more or less by the tax increment district that provides funding for the Downtown Development Authority (DDA), which coordinates and

oversees development activity in the area. It is a very large area which includes a "core" area on the north side of the river, the Brickell area to the south, the Overtown/Park West area and the Omni area to the north. In 1987, the DDA announced the building of nearly 7 million square feet of new commercial office space, 1.3 million square feet of new government office space and 1.4 million square feet of new retail space in addition to renovated office and retail space. Also announced were 3342 "new" hotel rooms and 2380 "new" dwelling units as a ten-year summary of Miami's most intense period of new development, a decade of progress!

The present skyline of Miami is the resulting achievement. The most dominant buildings are the 55-story original Southeast Financial Center (1984) by Skidmore Owings and Merrill (now First Union Building) and the 47-story original Centrust Tower(1987) by the renowned I. M. Pei Associates (now Bank of America). The romantic vernacular architecture, which dominated early Miami, has now been replaced by corporate banking icons, which boldly light up the Miami skyline at night. Most visible is the tower designed by Pei, which is ablaze nightly with different colored lights located on different levels, creating changing designs throughout the year for civic events.

The frenzy of new skyscraper construction is still rampant as cranes and skeleton structures fill the skyline and shoreline of Miami. The areas being transformed now are the Brickell Financial District, where new apartment buildings, luxury condominiums, and new hotels join with the office buildings there. At the end of the century, the tallest residential building outside of New York City, the Santa Maria, will soon be eclipsed by the "Millennium" and other planned developments.

Across the river, Flagler Street is still Miami's "Main Street." The Downtown Miami Main Street Program, a partnership of Miami's Downtown Development Authority, Dade

Heritage Trust, the Downtown Miami Partnership, and the City of Miami, has embarked on a series of major programs to provide marketing and a much-needed face-lift for the downtown. Recently the Congress Building was retrofitted for 128 residential dwelling units, with other residential projects planned. Storefronts and facades are also scheduled for improvement.

Not much of the nineteenth century remains in Miami in the way of structures. Most of what does is now in Lummus Park, west of the Miami River. Located there is Miami's first historic preservation project, the 1849 Fort Dallas Barracks, which was originally built near the mouth of the Miami River by pioneer William English. It was first used as slave quarters for his plantation, and then as an Army barracks during the Second and Third Seminole Wars. Julia Tuttle acquired all of the plantation in 1891, making it her home. The Daughters of the American Revolution saved the barracks from demolition in 1925, moving it to Lummus Park. Also in Lummus Park is the oldest house in Miami-Dade County, the 1858 homestead of William Wagner. It was moved in 1979 to the park and restored by Dade Heritage Trust.

The oldest Florida East Coast building in downtown Miami was located at 134 SE 2nd Street but was moved in the 1980s to Fort Dallas Park and restored. It was built in 1897 and was part of a housing project of structures Flagler erected for his workers. The wood frame structure became known as the Butler Building after Raymond Butler, who later operated his insurance company there. It is now Bijan's Restaurant.

But the most amazing thing that has happened in Miami's traditional core at the beginning of the new millennium is the discovery, during excavations for a new high-rise development, of the "Miami Circle." This intriguing archeological ruin, located on the south bank of the Miami River in downtown Miami, has drawn international attention. Proven by scientific testing to be at least 2000 years old, the Circle is a series of holes 37 feet in diameter

carved four-feet deep into the limestone bedrock, with an east-west alignment to the equinox. It was probably used for ceremonial or astronomical purposes and displays a sophisticated understanding of geometry and astronomy. Some speculated that the mysterious relic was created by Mayans or other people from afar; other experts felt it to be the work of the now-extinct Tequesta Indians. But whatever the ultimate answer, the entire treasure would have been bulldozed into oblivion if Dade Heritage Trust had not led a fight to preserve it. Advocacy efforts on many fronts paid off with political and financial support from the State of Florida and Miami-Dade County, helped by a loan from the Trust for Public Land and private donations. The developer received $26.7 million for his prime real estate, and the State of Florida now owns the 2.2 acre-site at the exact point where Miami's history began. Plans are underway to preserve and showcase this very special place, which has been at the heart of human settlement for so long. It is truly Miami's first neighborhood.

Aristides J. Millas has been an associate professor at the University of Miami School of Architecture since 1974. He holds a bachelor's degree of architecture from Carnegie-Mellon University and a master's degree of architecture in urban design from Harvard University. He has also taught at Princeton University, the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie-Mellon University. He has participated in numerous architectural and planning projects in Florida, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Arizona and Athens, Greece, which included new towns, sports stadiums, inner city renewal projects, historic districts, university master plans and Greek Orthodox churches. He has served on the boards of Miami Design Preservation League and Dade Heritage Trust. Since 1986 Professor

Millas has developed and taught "The Architectural History of South Florida," and with university sponsored research has given many public seminars, presentations, and tours focusing on architectural history and development issues.

PHOTO CAPTIONS FOR MIAMI

1. **The remarkable Julia Tuttle, a visionary pioneer and real estate developer, is known as the "mother of Miami" for persuading Henry Flagler in 1895 to bring his railroad to the small settlement on the banks of the Miami River. (***Courtesy of Florida State Archives)*

2. Henry Flagler, the "father of Miami" made millions as John D. Rockefeller's partner in Standard Oil, then started building a railroad and grand hotels down the east coast of Florida in the 1880s and 1890s. In 1896 he brought the Florida East Coast Railroad to Miami, and in 1897 he opened the magnificent 400-room Royal Palm Hotel at the mouth of the Miami River. (*Courtesy of Dade Heritage Trust***)**

3. **Guests teeing off on the lawn of the Royal Palm Hotel, 1899, in Downtown Miami. (***Courtesy of the Florida State Archives***)**

4. **The first hardware store in Miami was built in 1899 by Frank T. Budge on Flagler Street and Miami Avenue. (***Courtesy of Carolyn Junkin)*

5. **Store owner Frank T. Budge with Billy Bowlegs and Tommy Tigertail in 1897. (***Courtesy of Carolyn Junkin***)**

6. **Dr. James Jackson, Miami's pioneer doctor for whom Jackson Memorial Hospital is named, with his family on the porch of his early Miami home. (***Courtesy of Dade Heritage Trust)*

7. **A policeman stands on a Downtown Miami street made of wooden blocks in front of the old post office, at 100 NE lst Street, which was built in 1912.** (*Courtesy of the Florida State Archives)*

8. **Carl Fisher created the concept of Dixie Highway to connect the Midwest to Miami. In October 1915, the Dixie Highway Pathfinders crossed the Buena Vista Arch near NE 40th Street and 2nd Avenue.** (*Courtesy of Arva Parks & Company*)

9. **Gesu Catholic Church, built in 1922 at 140 NE 2nd Street, is the successor to Miami's first religious congregation. The first church was a small wooden chapel constructed by William Wagner on his homestead in 1874.** (*Courtesy of Dade Heritage Trust)*

10. **The Halycon Hotel, built in 1905, was designed by Stanford White and constructed of native oolitic limestone. It was demolished in 1938 and the Alfred I. Dupont Building was built on its site.** (*Courtesy of Dade Heritage Trust*)

11. **When Downtown Miami had a trolley...1st *Avenue and SE 1st Street in 1930.***
(Courtesy of the Florida State Archives)

12. **Students pose on the steps of Miss Harris' School, located on Brickell Avenue, in 1922.** (*Courtesy of the Florida State Archives*)

13. **The Dade County Courthouse, seen in this 1930 photo, was built between 1925 and 1929 by architect A. Ten Eyck Brown with August Geiger as associate.** (*Courtesy of Aristides Millas)*

14. **The Sears Roebuck Building, built in 1929, is the earliest known Art Deco building in the Miami area. It was the focal point for the traffic circle on Biscayne Boulevard at 13th Street, marking one of the most important intersections in the city at that time. Preservationists fought for years to prevent the demolition of the Sears Tower in the 1980s and 1990s. Plans now call for the Tower to be incorporated into the new Performing Arts Center complex. (*Courtesy of Dade Heritage Trust)***

15. **Gusman Cultural Center was built in 1926 as the Olympia Theater. It was designed by Chicago architect John Eberson as the first of his many "atmospheric" theaters, with an interior resembling the walled garden of a Venetian palazzo, with twinkling stars in the ceiling. Gusman remains one of Downtown Miami's architectural gems. (*Photo by Dan Forer, courtesy of R.J. Heisenbottle Architects, P.A.)*

16. **The Miami Daily News/Freedom Tower was built in 1925 by James M. Cox for his newspaper. It was designed by Schultze and Weaver and inspired by the Giralda Bell Tower in Seville, Spain. It became known as the Freedom Tower when it was used as a Cuban Refugee Center from 1962 to 1974. The Tower is now owned by the Mas family who are planning to turn it into a museum. (*Photo by Dan Forer, courtesy of R.J. Heisenbottle Architects, P.A.)*

17. **The lobby of the News Tower reflected the ornate interior of the Spanish Renaissance Revival style popular in the 1920s. (*Courtesy of Dade Heritage Trust)**

18. **Cuban refugees fleeing from the dictatorship of Fidel Castro received food, health care and financial assistance at the Freedom Tower, which became Miami's Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island.** (Courtesy of Dade Heritage Trust)

19. **St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church was built in 1948 along Coral Way in The Roads, an area once owned by William and Mary Brickell that is just west of Brickell Avenue.** (*Photo by Becky Roper Matkov*)

20. **The old and the new: The historic Southside School on Coral Way is overshadowed by the glass highrises of Brickell Avenue**. (*Photo by Becky Roper Matkov*)

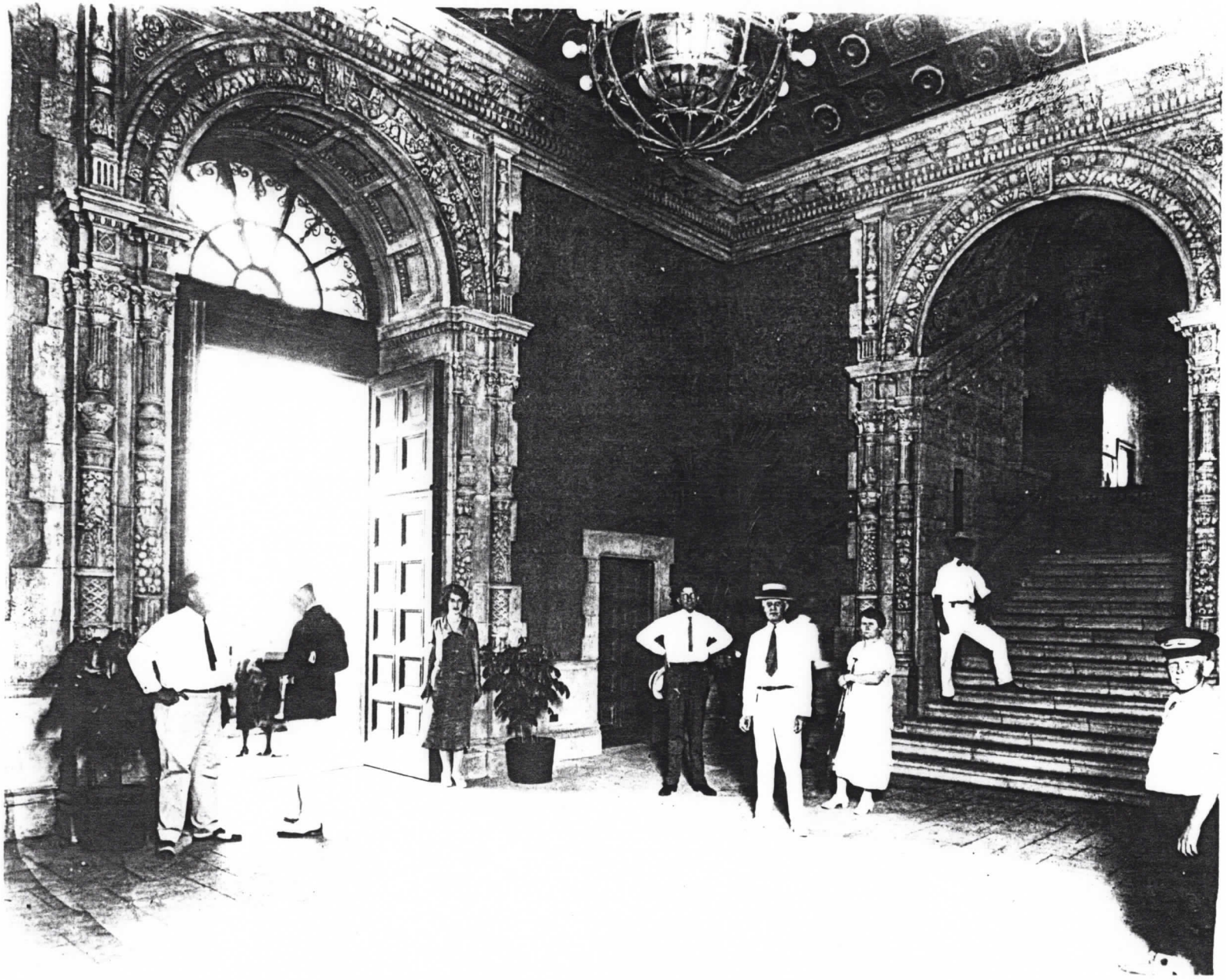
21. **The Atlantis Condominium on Brickell Avenue, designed by the internationally renowned architectural firm Arquitectonica, was seen regularly by a national audience in the opening scenes of the 1980s TV series *Miami Vice*.** (*Photo ©Norman McGrath, courtesy of Arquitectonica*)

22. **The mysterious Miami Circle archeological site on the Miami River in Downtown Miami is at least 2000 years old.** (*Photo by Becky Roper Matkov*)

23. **The magic of the Miami skyline.** (*Courtesy of the Downtown Development Authority*)

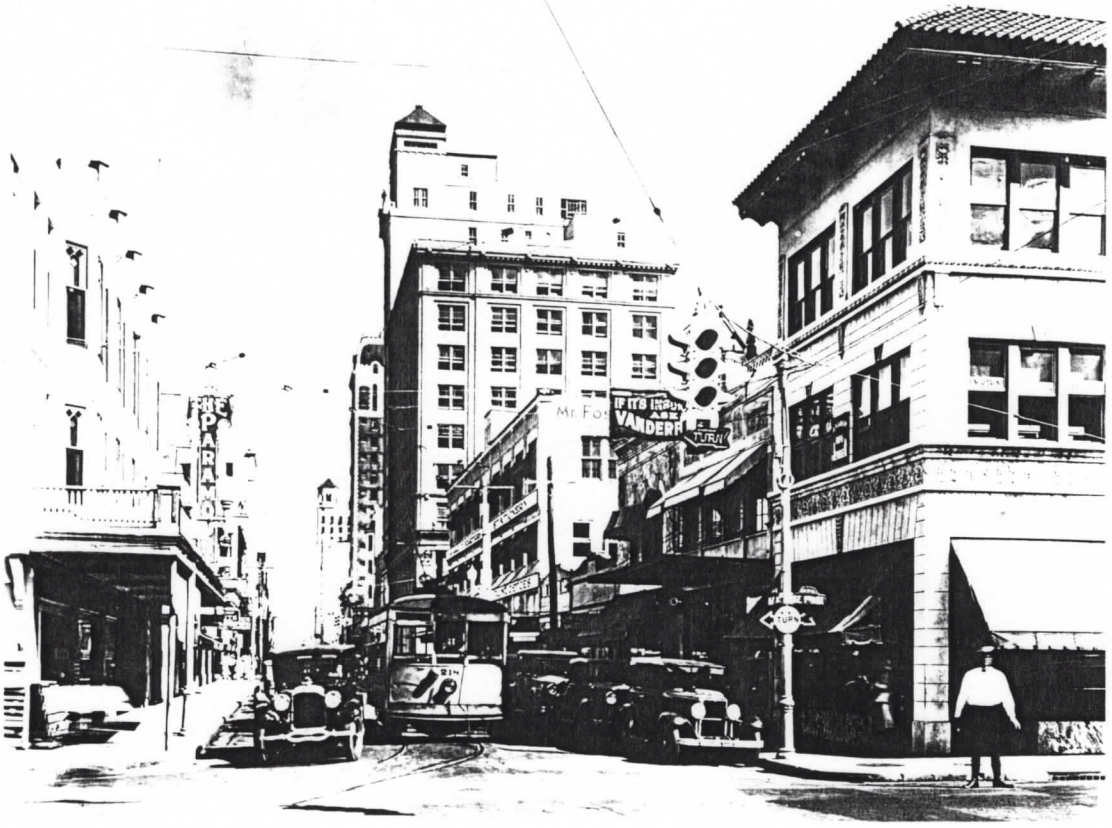
ST. GORMAN'S CHURCH TORONTO

MIAMI
DIXIE HIGHWAY
MONTREAL
BUENA VISTA
GATEWAY



James M. Cox Sr., former governor of Ohio and owner of the Miami Daily News and Metropolis, spent $1.5 million to build the lavish News Tower, later renamed Freedom Tower. The ornate interior mirrors the Spanish Renaissance Revival style popular in the 1920s when the tower was built.

Halcyon Hotel,
Miami, Florida.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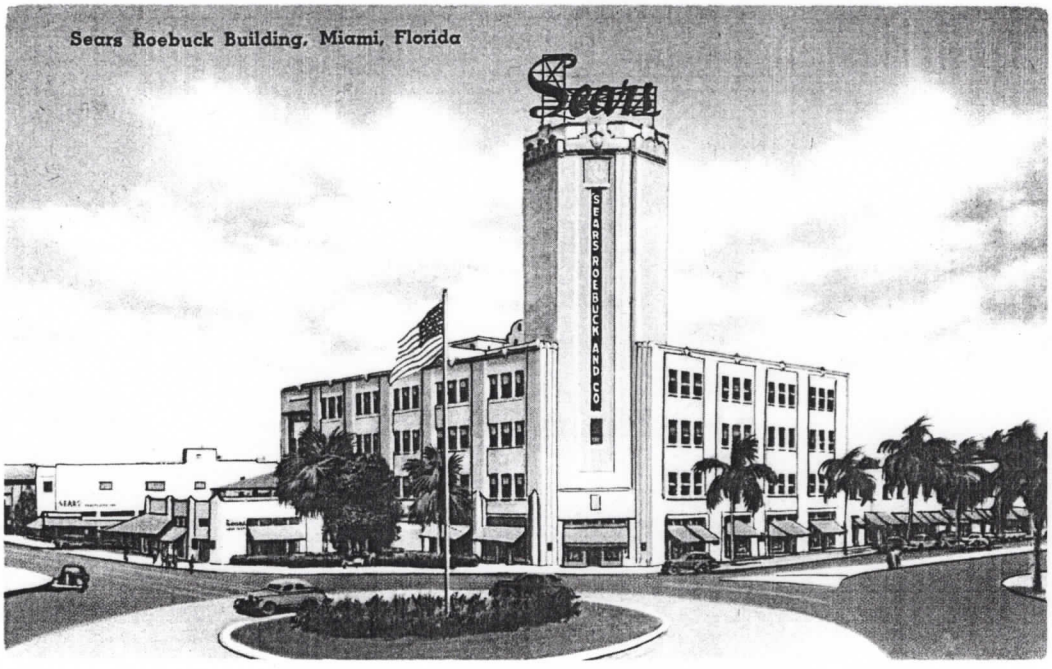
VANDERH
TURN


Sears Roebuck Building, Miami, Florida
Sears
SEARS ROEBUCK AND CO

Gesu Catholic Church

GESU CATHOLIC CHURCH - 140 N.E. 2 St. 1922. This is the successor to Miami's first religious congregation. The first church was a small wooden chapel constructed by Wm. J. Wagner on his homestead in 1874.

SIGNAGE
MIAMI
DRINK
COLONNADE
CAFETERIA

Julia Tuttle
Pioneer Resident and one of Founders of Miami